

ELYSIUM

By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



Elysium is basically a love story set inside a political allegory, housed inside a sci-fi genre. Set in the not-so-distant future, the film deals with current issues, such as separation of people based on where and when you are born, who raises you, how you use your life. It is also about the dreams that those who are not rich or in the “right” class of people have, and what compels them to risk their lives for the sake of others. If this sounds like the plight of our undocumented citizens, and the moral imperatives and injustices of the haves and the have-nots – well, that is exactly what this film shines a laser light upon.

Elysium unflinchingly portrays who has access to what and how much trouble some wealthy people will go to in order to keep the walls between the two populations as high and as difficult to cross as inhumanely possible. Matt Damon is lovely as a boy turned into a man who dares to want the same things that are so out of his reach. He is doomed by fate to be on the “wrong side of the cosmic track”. His choices, decisions and changes over time are the heart and soul of *Elysium*. His struggle is our struggle. It is his love for a woman, who is not viewed as “a citizen”, and his own battle to survive that fuel the engine and makes this film work on a purely human level.

Regardless of where you stand on legal vs. illegal status in the U.S., you cannot ignore what that means when lives are at stake and when those lives belong to innocent people whose only crime was to not be born into money or the preferred social status. I hope that any of us would do exactly what Max does if the stakes were the same. His nobility and his willingness to give up the most precious gift we have for the sake of those he loves elevates *Elysium* from the usual intentional message movie. Would we do the same if it were our family? Would we fight so hard to break through the barriers in order to access something as important as decent health care? *Elysium* provides those questions. You must give your own answers.

Jodie Foster and William Fichtner are great as the symbols of the elite power; a driven, upper echelon politician and a corporate glutton. Both will stop at nothing to gain what they believe is theirs by birthright and are then caught up in the game, only to be

sacrificed before making their next deal. The moral seems to be that the more you have, the more you seem to want, whether it is power or wealth, but there is no loyalty in either place. Love, however, holds more power than money. It is, ultimately, worth more than either.

So the question remains... what would you do in that situation? Go see *Elysium* and see if you come up with an answer that feels right. I give *Elysium* four space stations.

